



# Tusker Nation

SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS  
FOR SCSD FAMILIES



High school students enjoyed a musical celebration and competition during Black History Month, featuring artists from the 1920s to Y2K. Contestants were tasked with matching various songs to their respective decades. Winners were rewarded with a lollipop and got extra credit for singing and dancing!

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## Seen Around Somers



First graders wrote Valentine's Day cards and notes of encouragement to troops serving overseas, children in hospitals, and residents at the Paramount in Somers and the Firefighter's Home in Hudson, NY.



The Somers High School Academic Challenge team won first place in its division at the Metropolitan Academic Challenge Conference. The win qualifies the team to return to Nationals for the second year in a row.



Maya Angelou, Nelson Mandela, and Rosa Parks were just a few of the important Black people in history who second graders researched for their projects. The reports included what the person was best known for and other important facts.

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## A Taste of High School



Eighth graders received **a warm welcome** from high school students at "A Taste of High School". The orientation is meant to help ease the stress that often comes with the big transition from middle school to high school.

The soon-to-be high schoolers were given tours by the Peer Leaders, ate lunch in the cafeteria, browsed a club fair, and enjoyed musical performances by the band and chorus. The counseling department also gave an overview of what to expect academically and how to plan classes.

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## Junior Scores New Console for Student Life Center



***Philip Ziegler, center, plays the game Madden on the old Xbox console that he succeeded in to replacing.***

When high school students returned from February break, the Student Life Center sported a new Xbox Series S Console and two popular games, all thanks to the efforts of junior, Philip Ziegler.

With a bit of help from Student Life Coordinator Brenda O'Shea, Philip applied for and received a grant from SEPTA for the new gaming equipment.

"I thought it would benefit everybody," said Ziegler. "Honestly, it's good to give back rather than receive."

Ziegler enjoys spending free time with friends in the Student Life Center and often plays Madden 15 and Kinect Sports using a donated Xbox 360. Shortly after the winter break, he asked O'Shea why the center didn't have newer gaming equipment, commenting, "Madden 15 is 'really old.'"

Thus began O'Shea's challenge to Ziegler. "What system would you want and why?" asked O'Shea.

She suggested a Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) grant to cover the cost, but because she didn't know much about video games, he would have to do the research, budget, and present to the SEPTA Board. Ziegler eagerly embraced the task.

The following day, "we built a presentation, and by that, I mean that I wrote while Philip described everything," O'Shea recalled.

Ziegler presented his proposal to Principal Mark Bayer and Director of Special Services Stacey Elconin, and then presented his grant request at the SEPTA Board meeting on February 8. Board members unanimously approved the grant and added a gift to cover additional expenses beyond the grant limit.

"Philip's presentation was phenomenal," said Virginia Sheridan, SEPTA Board Member and grant chairperson. "His presentation was a shining example of so much goodness. We are grateful that he came to SEPTA to support his wise ideas."

Philip was exhilarated by the experience. "It was awesome! I felt really good, really independent," he remarked. "I just felt like a completely different kid at that moment. It was



great.”

“I was so proud of Philip because many would be overwhelmed by presenting to adults,” said O’Shea. “He was so confident and clear!”

## Serving Up New Friends at Lunch



***Students assigned to the Green Apple table in the intermediate school cafeteria ask questions to learn more about each other.***

Conversation and laughter filled the lunchroom as students enjoyed the first Mix It Up lunch of 2023 at Somers Intermediate School.

“The event encourages students to get to know their peers, make new connections, and have fun while practicing kindness and respect for each other,” said school counselor Alexandria Todorov.

The popular activity is part of the No Place for Hate program. Students were “mixed-up” using Jolly Rancher candies and matching flavor signs on the lunch tables. Recognizing the challenge of sitting with new people, Todorov left conversation starters on the tables such as, “Would you rather....” Animated chatter quickly ensued. “

It’s fun and good to have new people to have lunch with,” said fifth grader Hendrik Kuznik. “We get to learn new things about people.”

While engaging with students throughout the lunch periods, Todorov heard positive reactions to the activity. One 5th grader asked, “Can we do this every month?” Third and fourth graders remarked how much fun it was to get a Jolly Rancher and meet new people.

“As a school counselor,” she said, “I especially loved seeing students be kind to one another. I observed students joining tables that weren’t as full and inviting students to sit with them.”

SIS has been participating in No Place for Hate since 2016. Every year a committee

comprised of administrators, teachers, staff, and students meets to decide on activities to promote a positive school climate, kindness, and a bully-free school community.

In addition to the Mix It Up lunch activity, students have been sharing messages of positivity and perseverance over the morning announcements.

## 'Who Dun It' Art Mystery



***Middle school art teacher Gary Wanderlingh points out where the bicentennial mural is fading and needs repair.***

The paint on each of the squares of paper is faded but the significance of the mural outside the middle school art room is very clear.

“I think those might be the twin towers,” says art teacher Gary Wanderlingh, as he points to two, tall, gray rectangles in the upper right corner. “And that, obviously, is the Statue of Liberty and a Revolutionary War soldier.”

The mural was created by middle school students in the mid-1970s to commemorate the country’s 1776 bicentennial and has been on the wall near the art room since Wanderlingh himself was a student at Somers Middle School. The piece is made up of 56 small, numbered squares of paper that, together, portray major landmarks and moments in U.S. history.



“I took art from the teacher who was here when the mural was created,” says Wanderlingh, “I also remember very clearly the giant, wooden, ‘1976’ that was on top of the main building during the bicentennial.”

The mural has been covered with plexiglass, so it has survived these many decades, but barely. Wanderlingh wants to restore the piece of SMS history with the help of students, and, he hopes, anyone who might have participated in its creation.

“It is a great tie-in to the community involvement aspect of our Middle Years Programme,” says Wanderlingh. “I would love to know more about this piece work - who worked on it, whether it was made by an art class or an art club, etc. The students would be thrilled to work with a member of our community in restoring the mural.”

If you know anything about the mural’s origins or helped paint it in the 1970s, the Somers Middle School Art Department would like to hear from you. Please send an email to [pictures@somersschools.org](mailto:pictures@somersschools.org) with any information.

## BOCES Tech Center Offers Career Head Start



***Sophomores listen to a presentation in the high school auditorium about the career and technical skills opportunities at PNW BOCES.***

Somers High School sophomores recently learned about an opportunity to explore careers and learn technical skills through a local resource that dovetails with their schedules. The students attended a presentation by the Career and Technical Education Center (CTE) of Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, which offers courses and on-the-

job learning in fields ranging from audio production to welding, sports medicine, and more.

After the assembly, sophomore Wolfgang Cook was enthusiastic. "I'm interested in the welding program," he said.

CTE Director Catherine Balestrieri and Counselor Samantha Vredenburg introduced students to the more than 40 college, career, and job preparation programs offered at the Yorktown Heights-based center.

Balestrieri said that CTE courses carry three credits and meet every day in Yorktown for several hours, explaining that juniors and seniors compress their required courses at Somers High School into either the morning or afternoon sessions. Companies that offer practice and work experience to CTE students through internships include Bright Beginnings Pre-School Learning Center, RCJ Welding & Fabricating, Alchemy Post Sound, and Flik Hospitality Group.

The CTE team also presented an opportunity for high school seniors interested in careers in health or engineering: New Visions Health and New Visions Engineering. The advanced programs—available to students with an 85 or higher GPA—offer seniors an opportunity to earn college credits and experience internships or clinical rotations at organizations including Northwell Health, Blythedale Children's Hospital, College Central Network, and the newest internship connection, Tesla.

Phillip Kavanagh, SCSD Director of School Counseling and Student Support, attended the presentation with SHS students. "I'm continually impressed by the quality of the offerings from BOCES," he said. "Each year they add new programs to reflect the evolving needs of the job market and work in such great collaboration with us to support our students."

[Click here to watch a 2022 webinar about the Tech Center.](#) [Click here to see course offerings.](#)

## PTA Corner - PTA Drives Safety Campaign

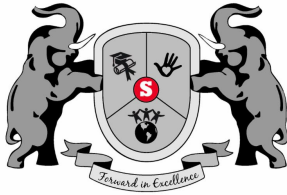


The Somers Central School District's PTA units have been very busy. The SMS PTA

sponsored over \$2,000 in scholarships for the Washington, D.C. trip. They are also partnering with the district on an informational session about the International Baccalaureate program. SHS is hard at work on the Get Egg'ed fundraiser, a Somers town tradition. SEPTA is honoring teachers and staff members through the SEPTA and Council awards. At Primrose, the PTA sponsored learning opportunities with author Katie Petruzzello, the author of *Mighty Mila*, an award-winning inclusive children's book. SIS is having fun with Refresh Recess and collecting gently used toys for indoor recess.

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